

VZCZCXRO4387  
PP RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHKB #1525/01 2921223  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 191223Z OCT 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1504  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 1778  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0486  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 0495  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAKU 001525

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, DAS MATTHEW BRYZA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MARR](#) [AJ](#) [AM](#) [IR](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER ABIYEV RAISES REGIONAL SECURITY  
CONCERNS WITH EUR DAS BRYZA

Classified By: A/DCM Joan Polaschik for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: EUR DAS Matthew Bryza met with Azerbaijani Minister of Defense Safar Abiyev on October 2 to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and regional security issues. Abiyev said the GOAJ advocates a peaceful resolution to the NK conflict, but there has been no concrete results in ending the conflict since the 1994 ceasefire, and that Baku is ready to "liberate its lands." Abiyev said the NK conflict is a chief impediment for the GOAJ's further cooperation with the USG. Abiyev cited several instances of Iranian and Russian violations of Azerbaijani territory--including two Russian TU-95 planes that recently crossed Azerbaijani airspace--while commenting that Iran and Russia are afraid of close US-Azerbaijani cooperation. Bryza encouraged further cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Abiyev agreed, while remarking that Tbilisi's relations with Russia tend to be guided by emotional responses. Reviewing the North Caucasus security environment, Abiyev said that several conflicts could erupt, particularly the one in Dagestan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On October 2, EUR DAS Matthew Bryza, accompanied by the Ambassador and Defense Attache, met with Azerbaijani Minister of Defense Safar Abiyev to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and regional security issues. Bryza told Abiyev that in addition to his work as an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair, he is responsible for the broader US-Azerbaijan relationship. Bryza noted that President Bush was pleased with his April meeting with President Aliyev, and the potential exists for elevating the bilateral relationship in three key areas: security, energy diversification, and reform. Cooperation in these three areas can deepen the strategic nature of the bilateral relationship, while helping Azerbaijan to become a regional example of political and economic development.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS  
-----

¶3. (C) Abiyev welcomed Bryza and thanked him for the USG's role in the OSCE Minsk Group process. Abiyev said that while the GOAJ advocates a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Armenian position did not assure him that the dispute could be solved peacefully. Abiyev remarked that "we are ready at any time to liberate our lands" and the GOAJ "under no terms will accept the taking of our land." Abiyev considered that Yerevan's policies were pushing Armenia toward regional isolation, as

the country increasingly can be considered an "island." Turning to the OSCE Minsk Group's efforts, Abiyev said that while there has been a ceasefire for ten years, there have been no concrete results in resolving the conflict. Abiyev stated that recently the Minsk Group has not been able to move the negotiating process forward. Abiyev also highlighted Russia's negative role in the NK conflict, noting that because Moscow is "a key player," this prevents Azerbaijan from being "apart from Russia."

¶4. (C) Abiyev noted that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict also limits the overall level of cooperation between the GOAJ and the USG. Specifically, Abiyev cited Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act as a critical impediment to deeper cooperation. Abiyev stated that GOAJ is "cooperating as much as possible," but "we aren't able to move forward in the current stage."

¶5. (C) Bryza reassured Abiyev that the USG respects the MOD's growing capabilities and its mission to ensure Azerbaijan's security. A peaceful resolution of the NK conflict will ensure that the three areas of bilateral cooperation remain intact and keep Azerbaijan oriented toward the West. Bryza commented that as an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair, he is committed to pursuing concrete progress toward a settlement and this need not result in any loss of Azerbaijani territory. Outlining the Minsk Group's plan for the seven occupied territories surrounding NK, Bryza remarked that the Co-Chairs aim for the immediate return of five districts and the quick return of the remaining two territories. Concerning the status of NK, the Minsk Group's strategy is to keep its status ambiguous for "as long as possible."

BAKU 00001525 002 OF 003

¶6. (C) Bryza said that the USG prefers to see Armenia have normalized ties with its neighbors. Regional security will be enhanced if Armenia does not feel isolated, but is instead integrated into international markets. Bryza also noted that normalized ties between Azerbaijan and Armenia could open the door to the removal of Section 907.

#### SECURITY THREATS FROM IRAN & RUSSIA

¶7. (C) Abiyev said Iran and Russia are "afraid" of close US-Azerbaijani cooperation. He also noted that growing threats in Azerbaijan's security environment are pushing Azerbaijan to act in a more "active and decisive manner." He proceeded to highlight several Azerbaijani security concerns with Russia and Iran.

¶8. (C) Russia--which is "still trying to link Azerbaijan to itself"--is extremely concerned by Azerbaijan's ties with the US and NATO, according to Abiyev. He mentioned that Russia has been concentrating ships armed with rockets in the Caspian Sea. Abiyev raised a recent Russian violation of Azerbaijani airspace by two TU-95 planes. Abiyev also remarked he had rebuffed Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov's requests for closer cooperation with the CASFOR Caspian maritime initiative being pushed by Moscow.

¶9. (C) Regarding Iran, Abiyev noted that Iran periodically violates Azerbaijan's territory in the Caspian Sea. Abiyev cited recent Iranian naval exercises in the Caspian as worrisome particularly given Azerbaijani-Iranian disagreement over the Alov oil field. Abiyev also mentioned several joint Iranian-Armenian projects that concern the GOAJ, specifically a gas pipeline from northern Iran to Armenia, the construction of a tunnel between the two states, and a hydroelectric station. Abiyev also claimed that Armenia supplied Iran with nuclear fuel.

¶10. (C) Bryza reassured Abiyev that the USG appreciates the GOAJ's security challenges. The USG takes Russian and

Iranian invasions of Azerbaijani territory or airspace seriously. Bryza also noted that as the Ambassador and DoD DASD James MacDougall have previously said, the USG is looking to develop clearer consultative mechanisms with the GOAJ regarding Iran. The USG also is considering the idea of peacekeeping training for Azerbaijan.

#### GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN TENSIONS

-----

¶11. (C) Turning to recent Georgian-Russian tensions prompted by the September 27 arrest of four Russian officers accused of espionage by Georgian authorities, Bryza remarked that the Russian reaction has been massive and disproportionate. Commenting on the general security threats in the South Caucasus, Bryza noted that the US desires to act in "solidarity with our friends," and supports the closest possible relationship between NATO and Azerbaijan. Abiyev reaffirmed Azerbaijan's desire for close cooperation with Georgia, remarking that Azerbaijan has always helped Georgia.

¶12. (C) Bryza said that the USG supports Azerbaijani-Georgian cooperation. Azerbaijan's provision of gas to Georgia last winter was a positive example of this partnership. Bryza noted that the USG needs regional friends like Azerbaijan to help the USG and European states understand Russia's aggressive behavior in the Caucasus. Bryza complimented the GOAJ for its ability to forge good working relations with Russia. While some perceive the GOG's approach toward Russia as too emotional, the GOAJ's relationship with Russia is marked by calm and the wise use of resources.

¶13. (C) Abiyev said that Georgian policy towards Russia is sometimes guided by emotion. Abiyev specifically cited Georgian President Saakashvili and Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili as examples. Abiyev wryly noted that the GOG likes to "make noise," but this "noise could come back to hurt them." Abiyev affirmed that Azerbaijan considers Georgia a close partner while cautioning that "sometimes Georgian actions push them (Georgia) away from Azerbaijan." Abiyev said that he recently hosted a senior Georgian military officer. During the visit, the Georgian officer

BAKU 00001525 003 OF 003

shared unspecified information about Georgian military plans regarding Russia (NOTE: It was unclear whether these Georgian plans were offensive or defensive in nature. Abiyev provided scant information). Abiyev's main point in relaying this information to Bryza was that Abiyev had to explain to the Georgian military officer how mismatched Georgian military forces were in comparison to Russian forces.

#### EXPLOSIVE SITUATION IN NORTH CAUCASUS

-----

¶14. (C) Abiyev highlighted that there are several places in the North Caucasus where conflicts could erupt. He noted Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan. He said that Dagestan is the most dangerous, as Russian special services are more active there and are "making mistake by mistake." Additionally, Russian efforts in prior years to arm elements of the Dagestani population to fight against Chechnya have led to a highly-armed population.

¶15. (C) Bryza responded that the US needs to better understand the security dynamics between the North and South Caucasus. Azerbaijan can help the USG understand these dynamics. Bryza also suggested the possibility of a trilateral security dialogue among the US-Azerbaijan-Georgia to analyze the security problems of the broader Caucasus region. Abiyev appeared receptive to this suggestion, remarking that Azerbaijan has dealt with these issues for a long time.

¶16. (U) Bryza did not have the opportunity to review this

message.  
DERSE